

NSC Draft - Vietnam Assessment  
9 June 1971

3 Jun 71 Walsh to Wayne Smith (NSC) memo re NSC Draft,  
"Vietnam Assessment" (commenting on NSC draft  
assessment)

Attachments: Daniel Bergin to Walsh (and various)  
memo, no date, re Vietnam Assessment  
(commenting on NSC draft assessment)

[redacted] to Wayne Smith memo,  
dated 5 Jun 71, re Vietnam Assessment  
(commenting on NSC draft assessment)

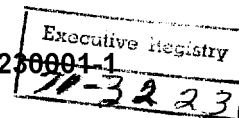
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8 Jun 71 TOP SECRET Wayne Smith to Walsh (and various) memo re  
Vietnam Assessment

Attachment: Draft study, Summary Analysis of Probable  
1972 Enemy Strategies and Alternative  
Measures to Improve RVNAF to Cope with  
the Main Force Situation at 100,000 and  
50,000 Mid-1972 U.S. Force Levels,  
7 Jun 71

9 Jun 71 Briefing Notes, The Enemy Threat

9 Jun 71 Walsh to DCI memo re SRG Meeting, 9 June 1971--Vietnam  
Assessment (informing DCI of Wayne Smith's request  
for an oral briefing on threat analysis)

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9 June 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT : SRG Meeting, 9 June 1971--  
Vietnam Assessment

1. Today's meeting of the SRG will consider a Vietnam Assessment prepared by an interagency drafting committee. The report requested by Dr. Kissinger on 26 May is a summary analysis of the enemy threat in 1972, the main force balance, and RVNAF improvement alternatives. The enemy threat analysis is based for the most part on our recent studies of NVA strategic options. I have been asked by Wayne Smith to be prepared to give a brief oral summary of the threat analysis.

2. We are in general agreement with the report except that we feel it does not give adequate acknowledgment to enemy capabilities in two respects--the ability to significantly increase the scale of combat in Cambodia at times and places of their choosing and NVA ability to quickly redeploy substantial forces into MR 3. Our military colleagues may quibble over some of the estimates and data presented in the report but will generally support its conclusions.

3. The main points of the paper are as follows:

Enemy Threat

a. The tempo of the war will heat up considerably in 1972. As we approach closer to the U. S. Presidential elections, Hanoi will be increasingly inclined to opt for offensive military actions.

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b. In manpower terms any of the seven strategic options will become feasible as U. S. withdrawals proceed apace. Logistics considerations do impose some constraints on Hanoi's strategic, particularly for the countrywide offensives. The control situation also limits Hanoi's options particularly in MR's 3 and 4.

c. Thus, MR's 1 and 2 appear to be the prime candidates for offensive activity during 1972. An offensive confined to MR 1 is regarded as the best case. A simultaneous offensive in MR 1 and MR 2 is regarded as the worse case.

#### Main Force Balances

a. This part of the report compares the balance of enemy and friendly main forces of the period. It finds that there will be an increasingly serious shortfall in friendly main force strengths in MR 1 as U. S. forces withdraw. Even in the case of protracted war, MR 1 would require permanent force augmentation.

b. Considering its 18 battalion general reserve and the existence of some surplus forces in MR 3 and MR 4, the necessary redeployments should enable to avoid serious control declines in the event of an offensive limited to MR 1. An offensive in both MR 1 and MR 2, however, would probably result in substantial control losses.

#### RVNAF Improvement Alternatives

a. This section considers three ways of redressing force imbalances--qualitative

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improvement of existing forces; redistribution of existing forces, and expansion of RVNAF.

b. The discussion in this section leads to no hard conclusions. Both qualitative improvements and RVNAF expansion offer little promise between now and end-1972. The discussion points to unit redeployments as being the quickest way to redress unfavorable balances. But even this is questionable because of the unfavorable impact on troop morale when units are moved out of their home ground.

c. The draft is significantly silent in terms of failing to speak on the need to launch an accelerated and all-out training program to improve the capabilities of existing forces, particularly the RF-PF.

[Redacted Signature]

PAUL V. WALSH  
Assistant Deputy Director  
for Intelligence

[Redacted Signature]

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OFFICIAL ROUTING SLIP					
TO	NAME AND ADDRESS		DATE	INITIALS	
1	Director		9 JUN 1971	[Signature]	
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ACTION		DIRECT REPLY		PREPARE REPLY	
APPROVAL		DISPATCH		RECOMMENDATION	
COMMENT		FILE		RETURN	
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Remarks:					
<p>George Carver and I are available to discuss the attached if you wish.</p>					
FOLD HERE TO RETURN TO SENDER					
FROM: NAME, ADDRESS AND PHONE NO.				DATE	
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SRG Briefing  
9 June 1971

## BRIEFING NOTES

### THE ENEMY THREAT

The discussion in this report on the enemy threat is, in effect, a summation of the several studies on NVA offensive capabilities presented at the last few meetings of the SRG.

1. The enemy strategic choices in 1972 depend on two considerations:

- his estimate of the impact of increased military activity on the political situation in both South Vietnam and the US.
- his assessment of his own capabilities as constrained by such factors as logistics, manpower, the control situation and the balance of forces in South Vietnam and Cambodia.

2. As we look into 1972, we are confident that the tempo of the war will accelerate substantially. Several factors point to an increasing enemy capability and willingness to mount offensive operations:

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range from a low of 70,000 to a maximum of 175 - 210,000.

1970 - 70  
85  
2 80  
1+2 95  
Camb 105  
1/Camb 125  
CUN/Kamb 175-210

4. These estimates are based on our analysis that the effect of US withdrawals will decrease enemy KIA by about 30%. They also incorporate the manpower requirements for Laos and Cambodia. With our estimate of reduced casualties, all of the strategies become feasible--insofar as manpower is concerned--during 1972. Only the general countrywide offensive would impose significant strains on Hanoi's manpower base.

#### Logistics

5. The analysis done to date shows that logistics considerations do impose some constraints. There are some differences in view. Both CIA and JCS believe offensives in MR 1 or MR 2 could be launched between January - March 1972. CIA believe an offensive in both MR 1 and MR 2 could be launched in the same period. The JCS thinks this capability is marginal.

6. CIA also believes an MR 1/Cambodia offensive is feasible which JCS believes it is not.

#### Control

7. The control situation in South Vietnam makes sustained main offensive operations unlikely in MR 3 and 4. It would favor

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- a. US ground force levels will have diminished to a point that the NVA can meet the ARVN face to face without significant US ground reactions.
- b. Hanoi will want to act before Vietnamization reaches the point that it can't be turned around.
- c. The enemy has had a year to expand and improve the logistic system in Laos.
- d. The after-effects of Lam Son 719 and the recent events around Snuol and Phnom Penh may have increased Hanoi's confidence that it can challenge the ARVN successfully.
- e. As the US elections approach, Hanoi will be increasingly willing to use military activities as a means of achieving political goals.

#### Manpower Constraints

3. Hanoi obviously must pay increasing manpower costs to executive any of the strategies calling for increased combat. We estimate the manpower requirements for the seven strategies will

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- 4 -

MR 1 and 2 as the best areas for NVA to mount an offensive:

MR 1	62%
MR 2	49%
MR 3	72%
MR 4	71%
SVN	66%

#### Conclusions

8. All things point to MR 1 and MR 2 as the most probable area of enemy offensive activity in 1972. An offensive limited to either MR 1 or MR 2 would seem the most likely. However, an offensive in both MR 1 and MR 2 is within enemy capabilities.

9. We would like, however, to issue a loud caveat to these conclusions. We feel quite strongly that the NVA presently have in Cambodia an on-going capability to mount significantly increased offensive operations at times and place of their choosing. Both from considerations of manpower and logistics, the supplies and people are in place. We believe that even without meeting the model requirements for a sustained offensive, the enemy could mount operations in Cambodia that would be seriously disruptive to the

- 4 -

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- 5 -

achievement of US policy goals in Indochina.

10. We would also issue another caveat. This is that although the mounting of sustained offensive operations in MR 3 seems unlikely we cannot rule out an increase in enemy activity in MR 3. Communist main force units in Cambodia could be brought back into MR 3. This would not only threaten the GVN writ in MR 3 but would also put a ceiling on Saigon's ability to move its general reserve forces to meet threats elsewhere in the country.

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to provide a summary analysis of:

- the probable threats to South Vietnam in 1972,
- given alternative mid-1972 U.S. force levels of 100,000 and 50,000 respectively, the possible implications of these threats for the main force balance in South Vietnam's Military Regions and in Cambodia and thereby on control in the countryside,
- alternative measures to strengthen RVNAF to cope with the probable situation in 1972.

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3 June 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR: Mr. K. Wayne Smith  
National Security Council

SUBJECT : NSC Draft, "Vietnam Assessment"

1. CIA has two general comments on the draft assessment plus several specific changes to update or correct some data.

General Comments

2. CIA is in general agreement with the thrust and conclusions of the assessment. We feel strongly, however, that the NSC draft tends (page 6) to write off too easily the likelihood of significant escalation of combat in Cambodia and is much too sanguine in its expectations that an NVA offensive there would fail. As we have noted in previous studies, the NVA have ample stocks and manpower already in place to support a significant increase in combat levels in Cambodia at times and places of their choosing. We would also point out that it would not be necessary for the NVA to meet the logistic or manpower requirements postulated in either the DIA or CIA assessments for the tempo of the war in Cambodia to reach levels that could be quite disruptive to the achievement of U. S. policies in Indochina. Given the recent performance of the ARVN forces deployed in Cambodia, their generally low morale, and the reluctance of their military leaders to commit themselves heavily, we are less certain that the ARVN would reinforce as vigorously and effectively as the NSC draft suggests. This would become even more unlikely as we get to the end of the period under consideration and U. S. combat forces are

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drawn down to the zero point. Finally, we feel that the fact that 85% of FANK's forces are in defensive positions is mistakenly cited as a reason that the NVA would not opt for offensive activities in Cambodia. The defensive penchant of FANK forces should be seen as a major fault and was reported as such in the recent assessment by the DoD field team. Given the frailties of the present Cambodian government, the prospects for an effective FANK force would seem to be rather gloomy.

3. CIA also feels that the NSC assessment should also make allowance for the possibility of increased military action in MR III. We should acknowledge that as we get further into 1972 the NVA could rather quickly deploy substantial numbers of troops from Cambodia into MR III if they saw an opportunity to effect a major reversal to ARVN forces or the Saigon government.

4. The main force ratios presented in the assessment, particularly in the adjustments for the performance of territorial forces, cannot be validated from the data contained in the report. We would suggest that the presentation of ratios reflect the actual deployments of forces over the period. The impact of qualitative factors and of the role of RFIPF forces could then be treated textually.

#### Specific Comments

Pages 2-3: The connection between 1970 mobilization and 1972 activity levels is not as direct as the NSC draft suggests and we have no intelligence data to support such a statement. We also do not believe that a lead time of more than one year is required for a major mobilization. These two paragraphs could be eliminated without hurting the assessment.

Page 3: Our current estimates of 1971 infiltration arrivals now stands at about 66,000, not 90,000. Of this total 37,000 are for Cambodia and about 12,000 are for South Laos.

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Page 4, Paragraph 1: Delete last sentence and substitute the following: But the North Vietnamese will still have available for induction in 1973 a new crop of approximately 130,000 17-year olds.



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PAUL V. WALSH  
Assistant Deputy Director  
for Intelligence

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LDX to:

Mr. K. Wayne Smith  
National Security Council  
Rm. 476-1/2 EOB  
Telephone: 103 4985

Mr. Arthur Hartman  
State Department  
Room 7212-A, S/PC  
Telephone: 632-2474

Mr. Louis Sarris  
State Department  
INR/REA, Rm. 7424  
Telephone: 632-2289

M. Gen. Fred Karhohs  
OASD/ISA  
Rm. 4C-840, Pentagon  
Telephone: 11 56944

B. Gen. Adrian St. John  
JCS J-5  
Rm. 2E-1018, Pentagon  
Telephone: 11 78510

Mr. Philip Odeen  
OSD/SA  
Room 2E-334, Pentagon  
Telephone: 11 57191

R. Adm. Daniel E. Bergin  
DIA  
Rm. 1 E 884  
Telephone: 11 77695

Dr. K. Wayne Smith  
National Security Council  
White House  
395-3371

Mr. Arthur Hartman  
State Department  
Room 7212A, S/PC  
632-2474

25X1 Mr. George Carver  
CIA, Room 6F19  
[REDACTED]

25X1 Mr. Paul Walsh  
CIA, Room 4F18  
[REDACTED]

Mr. Louis Sarris  
State Department  
INR/REA, Room 7424  
632-2289

Mr. Jim Wilson  
State Department  
6208 New State EA  
632-3368

Dr. Ernie Stern  
State Department  
AID Room 3942  
PPC/PDA/EAD  
632-4082

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